

In The Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

ClaimsWHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A device for examining chemical and/or biological samples, comprising

a sample carrier-(10) for receiving the samples,

an objective-(14) for observing the samples through a sample carrier wall (12), wherein a gap-(20) is defined between an outer surface-(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and an exit lens-(16) of the objective-(14),

a film-(22) of an immersion medium to be provided in the gap-(20) such that the film is in contact with both the outer surface-(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and the exit lens-(16) of the objective-(14), and

a protection means-(24) surrounding the exit lens-(16) for preventing the objective-(14) from becoming fouled by the immersion medium, wherein the protection means-(24) is connected with a suction means for discharging the immersion medium,

~~characterized in that~~

wherein the protection means-(24) comprises a capillary channel-(30) connected with the suction means for discharging the immersion medium.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the capillary channel-(30) is essentially configured as an annular gap around the exit lens-(16).

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 1-~~or~~2,

- ~~characterized in that~~wherein the protection means ~~(24)~~ comprises at least two collar portions ~~(26,28)~~ arranged around the objective ~~(14)~~ and defining the capillary channel ~~(30)~~.
4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to one of claims 1-3, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the protection means ~~(24)~~ comprises an overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~ for additionally receiving immersion medium.
 5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 4, ~~characterized in that the~~wherein overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~ comprises a reservoir bottom ~~(38)~~ having a reservoir bottom opening ~~(40)~~ via which the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with the overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~.
 6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to ~~one of~~ claims 1-5, ~~characterized by~~wherein a supply means comprising a supply line ~~(42)~~, wherein an outlet opening of the supply line ~~(42)~~ is arranged that near the exit lens ~~(16)~~ of the objective ~~(14)~~ that immersion medium is supplied into the gap ~~(20)~~ at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.
 7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to ~~one of~~ claims 1-6, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with a supply means for supplying immersion medium, and the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ comprises a capillary channel opening ~~(32)~~ which is arranged that near the exit lens ~~(16)~~ that immersion medium is supplied into the gap ~~(20)~~ at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.
 8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) ~~The device according to claim 7,~~
~~characterized~~wherein ~~in that~~ the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with a valve, in particular a 3/2-way valve, wherein the valve is connected with the suction means and with the supply means.
 9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for examining chemical and/or biological samples, wherein an exit lens ~~(16)~~ of an objective ~~(14)~~ is arranged opposite a sample carrier ~~(10)~~ for observing the sample through a sample carrier wall ~~(12)~~, wherein between an outer surface

(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and the exit lens-(16) of the objective (14) a gap (20) is defined such that in the gap-(20) a film-(22) of an immersion medium is arranged which is in contact with both the outer surface-(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and the exit lens-(16) of the objective-(14),

~~characterized in that~~

wherein via a capillary channel-(30) defined in the protection means-(24) surrounding the objective-(14) the immersion medium is discharged automatically, at least with the aid of capillary forces.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the immersion medium is supplied automatically, at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 10, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the discharge of the immersion medium is adjusted relative to the supply such that the volume of the film-(22) of immersion medium essentially remains constant.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An objective cap for protecting an objective-(14) from becoming fouled by an immersion medium, comprising

an inner collar portion-(26) adapted to be placed onto the objective-(14),

an outer collar portion-(28) arranged around the inner collar portion-(26), wherein the inner collar portion-(26) and the outer collar portion-(28) are at least partly spaced relative to each other such that an essentially annular capillary channel-(30) is defined, and

an outlet opening-(34) provided in the outer collar portion-(28), via which opening the capillary channel-(30) is connected with a suction means.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The objective cap according to claim

12, characterized by wherein an overflow reservoir-(36) arranged in the outer collar portion-(28) for receiving the immersion medium, wherein the overflow reservoir-(36) comprises a reservoir bottom-(38) having a reservoir bottom opening-(40) via which the capillary channel-(30) is connected with the overflow reservoir-(36) for discharging immersion medium.